NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

THE bulletin

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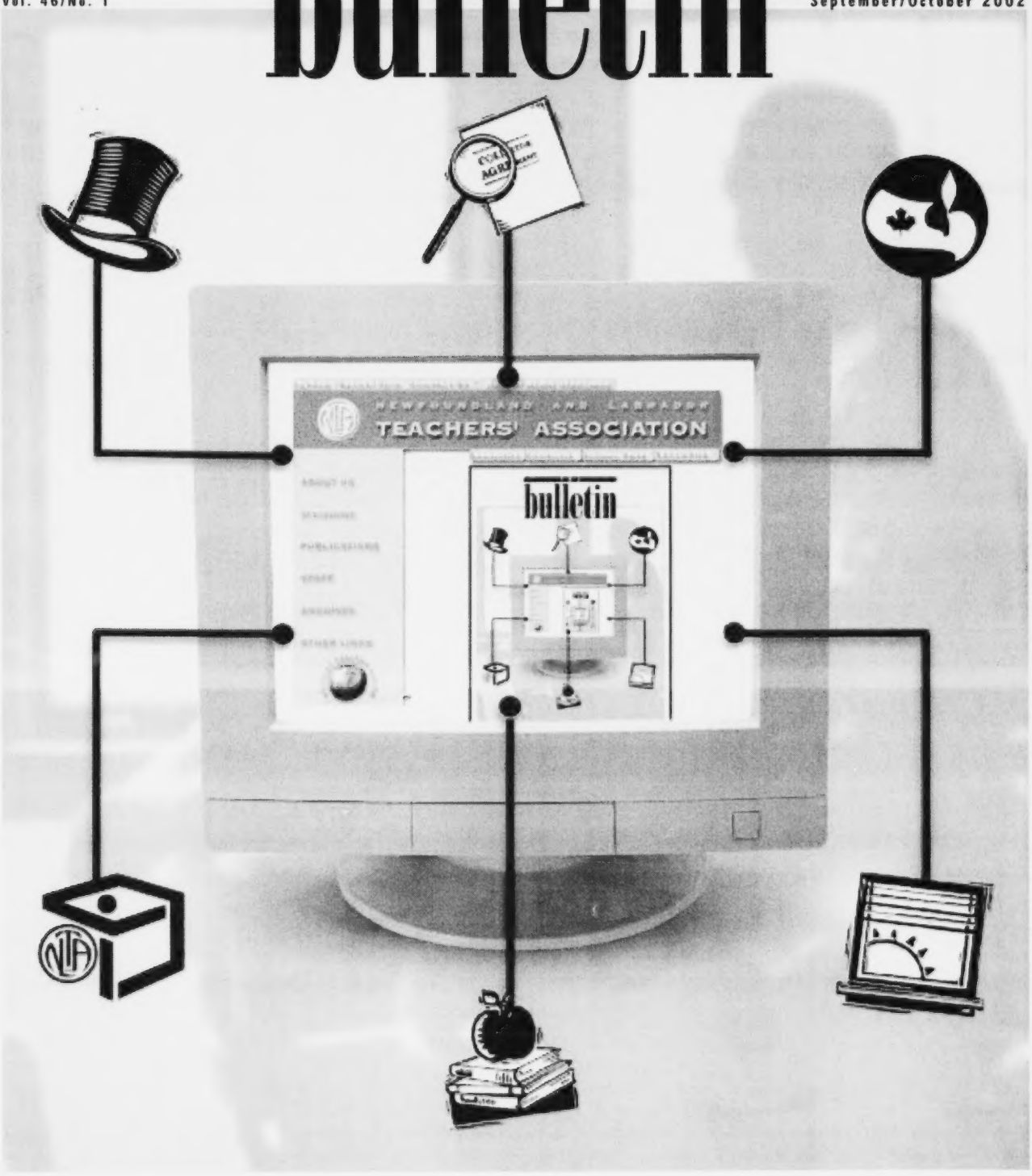

The Power of Learning

by LESLEY-ANN BROWNE

You will notice an advertisement in this issue of *The Bulletin* and you may have already seen or heard the radio and television commercials for our media campaign called "The Power of Learning".

This campaign was first discussed in September 2001 while I attended meetings with my Atlantic colleagues in Prince Edward Island. We wanted to do something different that would bring attention to the importance of education. The development of the campaign is cost-shared among the five Atlantic teachers organizations. We have done the same on many other projects in the past and have found it to be an effective way to get the message out and cut down on expenses.

The campaign has been a year in the making since time, cost and distance were factors in approving many elements. However, we finally completed the project and have started airing it in the Atlantic region. The commercials were shot in this province and I enjoyed supervising the project from start to completion. We had received proposals from production companies in Newfoundland and New Brunswick. The Newfoundland company was successful and I therefore agreed to supervise production.

The campaign is a bilingual umbrella campaign promoting the positive economic and social effects of public education – including teaching and learning. The campaign stresses the importance of a well-funded public education system to society.

The rationale for the campaign is to foster public and political awareness of issues relevant to teacher organizations of the Atlantic region. The focus is that public education is an economic imperative and valuable societal resource. The themes for the campaign are the importance of education to health, employment, economic development, justice, and poverty/social development. The campaign will show that money invested by governments today will realize large savings for society tomorrow.

When we discussed the elements of the campaign, we wanted to create a climate in support of education and learning as an investment in our future. Education is an economic imperative and a valuable resource. It is often undervalued and pushed to the background when other issues appear.

It is the intention that another campaign follow very closely with this one to reemphasize the importance of education. If you have any comments or opinions on the present campaign, I would be interested in hearing them.

Welcome back to another school year.

THE bulletin

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THE JANEWAY SAYS "THANKS"

ON BEHALF OF THE CURRENT AND future patients at the Janeway Children's Health and Rehabilitation Centre, we want to thank your organization for your generous donation to this year's Telethon. Your gift demonstrates that your organization cares very deeply for our children and the quality of their health care. It will be used to assist our hospital in the purchase of urgently needed medical equipment that is used in caring for children from all areas of our province.

Over the years your support has assisted us in purchasing isolettes used in the care of new born babies with problems, ventilators in which infants with breathing difficulties can receive relief, monitors to ensure little hearts are beating regularly and video imaging systems to assist surgeons when operating in delicate areas.

Through your continuing generosity and the combined support from many other Janeway Friends throughout Newfoundland and Labrador this year we exceeded our $1.5 million goal. Each successful Telethon enables the Janeway to purchase equipment, provide support for other child health programs and aid in research toward our children's health care.

The Foundation is merely a resource available to assist our donors in raising funds for the Janeway Children's Health and Rehabilitation Centre. Caring for our children requires a dedicated medical team. We recognize that raising funds for equipment and research is a team effort between the Foundation and our many supporters. Thank you for being a part of our team and ensuring the care is always there for our children.

Thomas R. Kendell
Chairperson
Janeway Foundation Board

PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

NEWS

NAIN

NLTA Medal winner announced

Joan Dicker

Joan Dicker of Nain, Labrador is the winner of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association Medal for the Spring Convocation 2002. Joan convocated this past May with a Bachelor of Education (Native and Northern Teacher Education Program) Degree, after completing her university courses in December 2001 through Distance Education.

Born and raised in Nain, Joan began work at Jens Haven Memorial School as a student teacher back in 1979 teaching the native language, Inuktitut. At the same time she began taking university courses offered through a Teacher Education Program in Labrador (TEPL). In 1986 Joan received a TEPL diploma and began teaching English Kindergarten where she taught for ten years. During that time she continued to upgrade her training working towards a degree in the Native and Northern Teacher Education Program. In 1996 Joan began teaching Grade 3 Inuktitut Immersion, a position she still holds today. Throughout her teaching career, Joan has been involved in many extra curricular activities involving the school and students, and has been an active volunteer in the community of Nain.

BAIE VERTE

Students publish collection of short stories

Seeking creative and innovative ways to publish their writing, two Grade 8 classes from Baie Verte High went "public" this past spring in a big way. Class representatives, Tim Furey from 8-12 and Chelsea Howard from 8-11, presented copies of a class collection of short stories to Mrs. Joyce Barker, Site Coordinator of the Baie Verte Peninsula Health Centre. The books will be displayed in the waiting rooms of the Centre and in the dental clinic. Language Arts teachers Patrick Howard and Rosalyn Walsh believe such "real world" publishing opportunities create a sense of awareness for the craft of writing. Students take pride in and ownership of their writing when they know that it is out in the community. The publishing effort also has the added benefit of promoting literacy and the joy of reading for pleasure.

Tim Furey and Chelsea Howard present copies of a class collection of short stories to Mrs. Joyce Barker, Site Coordinator of the Baie Verte Peninsula Health Centre.

A Grass Roots project also provided an opportunity for students to reach a wider audience and elicit constructive feedback. Students designed an individual webfolio linked to a class web site and samples of work completed throughout the year were added to each webfolio. People who visit the site are invited to respond to student work. The technology also afforded students the chance to experiment with photography, animation, and graphic design. To visit the site and check out the efforts of these "published" young writers go to www.bvhs.k12.nf.ca and click on the Grass Roots icon.

STEPHENVILLE

Students ease life of a diabetic

Jordan Legge, a Grade 6 student at Stephenville Middle School, appears to have some very loyal and caring friends. Jordan has been dealing with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus since he was diagnosed in 1998. This leaves him insulin dependent and requiring four to five needles per day. Even though Jordan has his diet and injections under control, he still requires numerous hospital visits.

Jordan's pediatrician, teachers and other doctors recommended him to be a perfect candidate for an insulin

pump which delivers quick acting insulin continually to the body just as the pancreas delivers insulin. The only complication for Jordan and his family was that the much needed pump cost $6,000 and they did not have medical insurance to cover any of the cost. This was where Jordan and his family discovered how many friends they really had and just how caring west coast residents can be.

Wally Childs, a teacher at Stephenville Middle School, held three sleepovers throughout the school year – one each for Grades 6, 7 and 8 – which raised over $4,000. "We thought that by the time the last sleepover had come up, residents would be tired of the cause," said Mr. Childs. "But they were very supportive and continued to make donations."

The students took on the fundraising project for Jordan as part of the Lions Quest Program which promotes service learning and community projects. Other fundraising events to raise funds for Jordan included a benefit dance that raised $700 and a walk-a-thon in Cape St. George where residents raised another $1,000.

Grade 6 students and their supervisors from Stephenville Middle School are pictured during a fundraising sleepover for Jordan Legge at the school. (photo courtesy of Robinson Blackmore)

Janice Legge, Jordan's mother, says she is forever thankful to the students at Stephenville Middle School and the residents of Stephenville, Flat Bay and St. George's who contributed to Jordan's cause. We are pleased to report that Jordan is currently being fitted for his new insulin pump and is hoping to be wearing it to school very soon.

(Information for this news story was reprinted with permission from an article by Kim Reid in the June 11, 2002 edition of "The Georgian".)

School recognized for outstanding student leadership program

Our Lady of Mercy Elementary School in St. George's is recipient of one of nine National Student Leadership "Program" Awards. The award was presented in June by Mike Boyles, President of the Canadian Intramural Recreation Association (CIRA) and Jim Berry, Chair of the CIRA National Student Leadership Committee, to Program Facilitator Mrs. Cindy Barker, Laura Chubb and the entire student leadership team.

The CIRA Student Leadership Development Program is an ongoing program that supports students, teachers, school communities, and leadership groups in their efforts to deliver high quality programs for children and youth. The Student Leadership Development Program promotes active living, encourages everyone to participate, and allows students to take an active role in the planning and organizing of school and community activities.

CIRA invites other schools with quality student leadership programs and/or would like to give individual recognition to a quality student leader to apply for the National Student Leadership Awards. The National Office can be contacted by tel: 613-244-1594, fax: 613-244-2438, or email: cira@intramurals.ca.

The student leadership team from Our Lady of Mercy Elementary School proudly display their National Student Leadership Award.

ST. JOHN'S

AESD appointment notice

Richard Harvey

Mr. Cyril Hayden, Chair, Avalon East School District (AESD), is pleased to announce the appointment of Richard Harvey to the position of Assistant Director of Education, Personnel, effective August 31, 2002. Richard succeeds Thelma Whelan, who recently retired from this position.

Richard had been Associate Assistant Director of Personnel with AESD since 2001. Prior to joining the District office, Richard was Principal of Queen Elizabeth Regional High School in Foxtrap for 18 years. He also held administrative positions with two high schools in central Newfoundland and was a high school science teacher for four years.

Richard's professional involvement includes National President of the Canadian Association of Principals Foundation from 1996-1999 and he twice served as Chair/Co-Chair of the National Conference of the Canadian Association of Principals when it was held in St. John's. Richard also served as Provincial President of the School Administrators' Council from 1990-95.

Richard holds a number of degrees from Memorial University including Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Science and Master of Educational Administration.

"It's the first day of school. Their parents have unleashed them, and they're on the way."

School applauds teacher achievements

Booth Memorial High School is proud to recognize the recent achievements of two of its staff menbers.

Congratulations are extended to Ms. Mikki Spracklin who was recognized by the St. John's Northwest Rotary Club with one of the Rotary Awards for Teaching Excellence. Mikki's award is in recognition of her many years of dedicated service for students with special needs.

We also wish to congratulate our English Department Head, Mr. Paul Matthews. Paul was awarded one of the Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence – Certificate of Achievement for his contributions to the students in his English classes.

Bill Rose, Principal of Booth Memorial, says in addition to the recognition certificates that were awarded this past June, both honours come with a cash award to be utilized by these teachers to enhance their programs during the upcoming academic year.

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

Promoting volunteerism: from classroom to community

The Community Services Council of Newfoundland and Labrador (CSC) has developed a classroom-friendly information package designed to promote the importance of volunteers and volunteerism among K-12 students. The package, which will be sent to every school in the province by early October, includes posters highlighting the important and diverse contributions made by volunteers in this province, as well as information and suggested activities to encourage classroom discussion. For information contact volunteer-centre@csc.nf.net.

Input sought from teachers on high school teacher stress

Lynda Younghusband is conducting research on High School teacher stress for her PhD. She would like to interview High School teachers about their experiences of stress. Interviews are confidential. Interviewees will remain anonymous and no school districts or schools will be identified. Lynda can be contacted at ybnb@nfld.net or at 726-8145 for further information.

CANADA

Submissions sought for A&E Annual Teacher Grant Program

Marking its 10th year of recognizing teaching excellence and innovation in Canada, A&E Television Networks launched the 2003 A&E Canadian Teacher Grant Program in September. The national grant program is open to Canadian teachers from Kindergarten through Grade 12 and will honour and award teachers who develop creative and enriching methods of instruction inspired by quality A&E productions.

To participate teachers must create a unique classroom curricular program using A&E programming. Each entry will be judged by an independent panel of educators, education advocates and television professionals on the basis of three criteria: originality; how well A&E program(s) and resources are incorporated into the lesson; and how well the lesson relates to the subject or topics being taught.

Four grand prize winners will receive $1,000 and an A&E video library (TV, VCR and collection of classic A&E videos) for their school; and four winners will receive $500.

The deadline for submissions is April 11, 2003. Teachers may submit entries by fax at 212-210-1493 or by mail to A&E Canadian Teacher Contest, c/o Temple Scott Associates, 250 The Esplanade, Suite 301, Toronto, ON, M5A 1J2. The link for contest information is www.aande.com/class/canadianclass/grant.html.

Author Janet McNaughton's book will be reprinted for January

The parent company of Stoddart Kids, publisher of *Catch Me Once*, *Catch Me Twice* and *To Dance at the Palais Royale* went bankrupt in August, leaving very limited numbers of books. The titles are being sold to HarperCollins Canada, and new mass market paperback editions of both books will be produced as soon as possible. *Catch Me Once* should be available by January. Author Janet McNaughton says that while the timing of this disruption could not have been worse, it will not happen again. Ms. McNaughton has updated her web site to provide new resources for anyone teaching *Catch Me Once*, including historical photographs and newspapers and links to related educational sites. More will be added in the coming weeks. That information can be found at http://avalon.nf.ca/~janetmcn/catinfo.htm.

CBC is looking for your input

LEARNING CURVES
Education in Atlantic Canada –
is it making the grade?

CBC goes back to school this fall to learn more about the state of education (Grades 1 to 12) in Atlantic Canada. But before we even start, CBC Radio and Television would like to hear from you. Please give us your thoughts, story ideas, comments and suggestions.

Keep watching … CBC will be holding community events in your province to discuss and debate education issues that are important to your communities.

Call us toll free at **1-888-368-1234** or contact us through our website: **cbc.ca/learningcurves**

You Can Make a Difference

by WINSTON CARTER

Each school year brings with it many new and exciting challenges and rewards. To our new teachers, welcome to the teaching profession and the NLTA. The planning for the year has begun. We are now all in overdrive and can hardly remember our summer vacation.

Your Provincial Executive Council held its planning and priorities meeting for the 2002-03 school year in mid August and unanimously supported four major priorities for this year: Quality of Teacher Work Life; Membership Involvement; Communications/Public Relations; and Teacher Accountability/Assessment/ Professionalism/Certification. We will keep you informed of activities re these priorities.

Recruitment and retention of teachers in this province will remain at a critical level until more supports are implemented at the classroom level. Teachers are currently spending far too much time in clerical/ technological areas to be fully effective in their areas of expertise. Lack of time and inservicing to do the job properly is leading to high stress levels and ultimately to teacher burnout. The three professional development/inservice days as per Article 28:01 of our current agreement *must* be used *in addition* to the amount of professional development/inservicing used by Boards last year. For school boards to merely maintain the status quo would be a very short-sighted approach to a major pedagogical need!

Much has been written of late about teacher accountability. Some provinces have gone as far as teacher testing while others insist on a maximum number of hours of professional development over a specified period of time. This year, while working in tandem with the Canadian Teachers' Federation, we will assist in the development of a policy on teacher accountability and assessment. As well, through our Department of Education Liaison Committee we will continue to monitor initiatives in the areas of assessment, accountability and professionalism.

In my travels I am a constant witness to the dedication, commitment and determination of invaluable strategies and instructional practices that our teachers routinely use in their daily work. As an Association we must do more to profile innovative teachers and teaching practices. Much can be gained from an awareness of what is going on within a single school (i.e. reporting), or among several schools (i.e. video teleconferencing) throughout our province.

The key to any strong and viable organization is membership involvement. The NLTA provides opportunities for members to have a direct say in how they want their Association to represent them. Your School Representative has the responsibility for taking your issues/concerns to the Branch executive. Article 5 of the current collective agreement provides members with the opportunity to serve on a school board-teacher liaison committee where local school issues may be addressed. Your Branch President is a member of a Provincial Joint Council (consisting of Provincial Executive Council and Branch Presidents), and you have the opportunity to become a delegate at our BGM which is held during the Easter recess.

You are also reminded that during the second week of May 2003 all teachers will be able to exercise their democratic right and decide who will lead this Association for the next two years. It is the first time in our 112 year history that our entire membership will vote on their choice of President and Vice-President. In the coming months we will be working very closely with our Branch Presidents/School Representatives to ensure that all aspects of this vote is completed in a most expedious manner.

So thank you for choosing the teaching profession as a life-long career. You now owe it to yourself to get to know how the system works and how best you can make a positive difference.

During the CTF AGM held in St. John's this summer, I was acclaimed as one of the four vice-presidents of the Canadian Teachers' Federation. This new appointment will afford me the opportunity to participate in leading-edge thinking of where we are going at the national level and how we can best serve our members at the provincial level.

I am looking forward to this year with a great deal of optimism. During my first term in office the President's visitation program had taken me into many of your schools. Again this year I am looking forward to meeting or becoming reacquainted with you in the coming months. Best wishes for a successful year.

Challenges and Opportunities

by EDWARD HANCOCK

To all our members, may I offer a most sincere "welcome back" at the beginning of another school year. I trust the summer was relaxing and enjoyable for all and that the school year which has just begun will be a rewarding one.

It is important that we try to begin each new school year by keeping foremost in our minds how essential the process of education is to society and to the individuals in our care, and by recognizing the challenges and opportunities inherent in our own role in that process. This past summer I had the opportunity to hear Rex Murphy address the delegates at the AGM of the Canadian Teachers' Federation in St. John's. Rex, in his usual inimitable style, spoke eloquently and passionately on the "sacred function" of education and its absolutely critical importance to the functioning of the entire democratic society. It is impossible to capture in a few sentences, but his thoughtful and thought-provoking message was that teaching and learning, education and schools, are not the ornaments, they are the very essence, of human existence. Education goes to the heart of the functioning of society and is not, nor should it be allowed to become, a one-dimensional preparation for employment.

I believe that, as teachers, we constantly need to be re-reminding ourselves of the importance of our role in the great enterprise of education. Such is even more critical when we feel threatened to be overcome by the mundane, the trivial, the nonessential parts of our work and seem to be losing sight of what we are really doing. As one teacher said to me, "If I could just be left alone to **teach**, we can make magic happen in that classroom."

That brings us around to a consideration of the quality of teachers' work lives and how that quality is affected and imposed upon by so many different variables. That issue continues to be one of your Association's priorities for this year and it will continue to occupy our time and energy, as it does for all the teachers' associations across Canada who are wrestling with the same concerns.

Those of us who have been involved in this profession for any period of time recognize that teaching is not a "job" which you pick up when you enter your place of work in the morning and leave behind when you exit the building in the afternoon. Quite the opposite is true. It can, and often does, become all consuming. If we are truly professional, we are constantly assessing and critiquing our own work and seeking the advice and input of others to refine and improve that last lesson, that last class or that last unit of work. It is axiomatic then that the work is never "done" in the true sense of the word. The secret to surviving as a teacher is, I believe, to set an honest and defensible boundary for the amount of work we give to ourselves; a boundary that ensures that necessary tasks are completed to a professional degree, but that also recognizes that perfection is rarely attained. It should be a boundary that also makes allowance for the fact that there is life outside the classroom door. We must each set parameters around what constitutes an honest, professional day's work; no one else will do it for us.

I recently came upon an article by Benjamin Stein titled "How to Live Another Year". In it, Stein recounts meeting a sort of crossroads concerning the ever increasing demands of his career when he suddenly made the realization that, "I had to learn how to live another year without letting my work kill me." He noted that success in any endeavor means that obligations and duties pile up, often leading to stress that is created by giving ourselves unrealistic goals and placing on ourselves unrealistic demands. In that article, Stein recounted several lessons to help keep things in perspective. I have briefly capsulized some of them here:

1. **Take a major slug of humility.** My day, today, is just one of billions that are being lived. The world will not end if I don't get everything done today.
2. **Don't hug a grudge to death.** There will always be those who will mistreat others or let them down. While that might guide your dealings with them in the future, the point of forgiving and letting a grudge go is to let yourself off the hook.
3. **Be realistic.** Setting impossible goals helps no one at all, least of all yourself. Do what you reasonably can and focus on those things you've established as the most important priorities.
4. **Get enough rest.** Working seven days a week and sleeping fewer hours than you require each night is a template for self-destruction.
5. **Laugh at yourself.** Look for the humor in unsettling situations. Be gentle with yourself in accepting your own foibles and mistakes.

Consider making it your "new year's" resolution to keep such life lessons in mind as you make your way through this school year. I pledge to you the commitment of all of your staff at 3 Kenmount Road to providing you with the highest possible level of service and representation as you carry out your part in the critical enterprise of education.

National Public Opinion Poll Results Released at CTF AGM

Advancing Public Education was the theme of the 82nd Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) hosted by the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association in St. John's, July 11-13, 2002.

Approximately 200 teacher leaders from across Canada met to discuss and adopt resolutions of importance to Canadian teachers at this annual event which is both an education forum and a business meeting.

"For the last 82 years, CTF has been the voice of Canadian teachers promoting quality public education on the national and international scene," says CTF President Doug Willard. "It is crucial that this national voice remain strong, relevant and that it continue to work towards promoting an even stronger public education".

Yukon Teachers' Association President Terry Price, currently serving as one of CTF's Vice-Presidents, was elected by acclamation to the position of President-designate. Price has been known for her strong working knowledge of the issues facing educators locally, nationally, and internationally.

"I am passionate in my desire to protect and advance a strong public education system and the teaching profession," says Price. Prior to her election as YTA President, she worked as a student counsellor at Porter Creek Secondary School in Whitehorse, Yukon. Her 25 years teaching have seen her teach in British Columbia as well as Faro and Whitehorse in Yukon. Price will assume her responsibilities as CTF President in July 2003 when the current president, Doug Willard, ends his term. Willard will then continue to sit on the Executive Committee as Past President. The CTF Presidency is a two-year, non-renewable term.

CTF Executive Committee 2002-03: Back row (l-r): V.P. Peter McCue (BCTF); President-designate, Terry Price (YTA); V.P. Winston Carter (NLTA). Front row (l-r): V.P. Roger Regimbal (OTP); CTF President, Doug Willard; CTF General Secretary, Julius Buski; and V.P. Wayne Clements (STF).

Other members of the CTF Executive Committee who were acclaimed are: Winston Carter, Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association; Wayne Clements, Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; Peter McCue, British Columbia Teachers' Federation; and Roger Regimbal, Ontario Teachers' Federation. All will serve as vice-presidents during 2002-03.

One of the highlights of the AGM was the releasing of a public opinion poll which shows that 80% of Canadians support increased funding for elementary and secondary schools. The findings of CTF's *National Issues in Education Poll*, one of the largest on public education in Canada, are based on interviews with 2,265 adults throughout the country and was conducted by Vector Research and Development in early May 2002.

When asked to rank the highest spending priority, 'class size reduction' was named as the number one priority by those surveyed. To support this point, seven in 10 Canadians believe that reducing class sizes would make a big improvement in the quality of teaching in schools in their community. Furthermore, 60% of those surveyed believe that class size is very important in judging or evaluating publicly funded schools in their community.

"These poll results are clear," states CTF President Doug Willard. "Canadians value their education system and recognize that cuts in public funding for education are hurting the learning conditions of our children, which is why they must be reversed. Far too many cuts have been made under the guise of improving the quality of public education when, in fact, they have been made because of fiscal restraint."

Other sessions at the AGM included an address by social commentator and editorial journalist Rex Murphy; a presentation on teacher supply and demand by Dr. David Dibbon, Assistant Professor with the Faculty of Education at Memorial University; and, an

international panel discussion on Women in Education and Women's Networks.

Two Special Recognition Awards were presented at this AGM. One of these went to Jim MacKay, former Executive Director for the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. Mr. MacKay has spent 35 years supporting public education and served on many CTF committees as well as being the Resource Person to CTF's John M. Thompson Fellowship Program. The other award went to Terry Mangan, former Deputy General, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. Mr. Mangan has contributed greatly to improvements in teachers' collective rights and welfare and has been devoted to the process of improving pension plans for teachers.

CTF President Doug Willard addressed delegates and released results of the public opinion poll.

CTF is the sole national organization whose mandate is exclusively dedicated to the economic and professional well-being of teachers in Canada and to the promotion of public education. CTF, the voice of 240,000 teachers in Canada, is represented on the Executive Board of the 24-million member Education International. CTF coordinates the sharing of ideas, knowledge and skills among the 14 provincial and territorial Member organizations throughout Canada.

The 2003 CTF Annual General Meeting will be held in July 2003, and will be hosted by the New Brunswick Teachers' Association.

Employment Insurance Update

by STEFANIE TUFF

As many of our members are likely aware, replacement or term contract teachers often experience considerable difficulty and frustration when applying for Employment Insurance (EI) benefits during the summer months. This is especially true for those who have already accepted a contract for the following September at the time they make their EI claim. The purpose of this article is to shed some light on a confusing situation and to provide an update regarding the implications of a recent Federal Court of Appeal ruling on this issue.

"Over the past few years, the NLTA has provided legal assistance to quite a number of teachers for EI appeals on the issue of summer benefits for replacement teachers who had accepted teaching contracts for the subsequent school year."

The Employment Insurance Regulations state that, in general, teachers are not eligible to receive EI benefits during the "non-teaching periods" (Christmas, Easter break, July and August) unless they meet one of three exceptions, which are:

- if the teacher's contract of employment for teaching has terminated;
- if the teacher was working on a casual or substitute basis; or
- if the teacher qualifies for EI benefits on the basis of employment in an occupation other than teaching.

Over the past few years, the NLTA has provided legal assistance to quite a number of teachers for EI appeals on the issue of summer benefits for replacement teachers who had accepted teaching contracts for the subsequent school year. Our solicitors have argued that these teachers would fall under the first exception in that their replacement contract for one year had terminated and the new contract would not take effect until the following September. The Employment Insurance Commission's initial decisions on eligibility and appeals to the Board of Referees and Umpire levels did not resolve the issue. The appeals that were heard resulted in inconsistent outcomes in cases that are, for the most part, based on very similar facts. Due to the number of appeals involved and the lack of consistency in appeal decisions, the NLTA decided, based on legal advice, to take one "test case" to the Federal Court of Appeal to get a final decision on this issue. The Commission and the NLTA agreed to put other ongoing cases on hold pending a decision in this appeal.

The case in question involved a teacher who had been hired for a full-year replacement position that ended on June 25, 1999. Just prior to that date, he accepted a further full-year replacement position for the 1999/2000 school year. The teacher applied for but was denied EI benefits for July and August of 1999. His appeal to the Board of Referees was successful but the Commission appealed to the Umpire and the decision was reversed. The Federal Court of Appeal heard the teacher's appeal on June 26, 2002 and upheld the Umpire's decision. The Court held that, in light of the Schools Act, 1997 definition of a "school year" – July 1 of one year to June 30 of the following year – and the fact that the new contract was accepted prior to the expiry of the old one, the teacher was not unemployed during the summer of 1999 and was not entitled to EI benefits during that time. The Court also found it significant that the teacher received "holdback" pay during the summer. They felt this was a clear indication that the teacher's contract remained in force as he would have had a valid action against his employer had he not received payments in July and August. It is interesting to note that, at the appeal before the Umpire, the NLTA solicitors provided evidence from the school board in question stating that the board did not consider the teacher's new contract to commence until September. However, the Court felt that the wording of the Schools Act, 1997 definition was a determinative factor.

The NLTA has consulted with its solicitors regarding the implications of this decision. It is highly unlikely that the Federal Court of Appeal decision, which was unanimous, could be successfully appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, or that leave to appeal to this level would even be granted. The Federal Court of Appeal ruling is binding and, based on our solicitors' advice, future cases will be dealt with in the following manner:

- legal assistance for EI appeals will not be provided in cases involving replacement teachers seeking summer benefits who have been in a full-year, full-time replacement position and have accepted a contract for the following school year;
- requests for legal assistance for EI appeals from replacement teachers who have not been in a full-year or full-time (½ time, etc.) position and have accepted a contract for the following school year will be considered on a case by case basis in consultation with the NLTA's legal advisors;
- legal assistance for summer benefits EI appeals will be available to replacement teachers who do not obtain a position during the summer for the following school year.

This issue is not unique to Newfoundland and Labrador and there is currently a case from Alberta awaiting a hearing date from the Federal Court of Appeal. Due to their similar use of term contracts, the Commission has placed all appeals from Manitoba on hold pending a decision in the Alberta case. The NLTA, along with representatives from all provincial teachers' associations, is involved in efforts being made by the Canadian Teachers' Federation to develop a proposal to take to Human Resources and Development Canada to lobby for changes to policy and/or regulation that would provide a more fair and consistent approach to these types of cases.

Stefanie Tuff is an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA. If you have any questions regarding your EI claim, or are considering filing an appeal to the Board of Referees or Umpire, please contact Stefanie by calling 726-3223 or toll free at 1-800-563-3599, ext. 232.

An Overview & Update

School Board-Teacher Liaison Committees

by STEFANIE TUFF

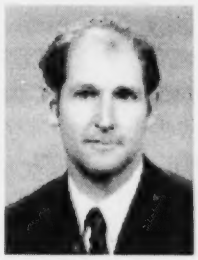
Article 5 of the Provincial Collective Agreement (Article 16 of the Labrador West Collective Agreement) provides for the appointment of a School Board-Teacher Liaison Committee for each school board. The purpose of the Liaison Committees is to provide, through discussion, the opportunity for teachers to have direct access to and get responses from representatives of their employer regarding any questions or concerns surrounding the teaching and learning situation, or other matters of mutual interest and concern at the school level. Liaison Committees are intended to be advisory in nature and often act as sounding boards for ideas when a school board is developing policies on educational issues or on matters affecting the working conditions of teachers. However, Liaison Committees are not intended or permitted to deal with grievances nor discuss the modification of the Collective Agreement or any other matter properly left to the normal collective bargaining process. The Collective Agreement provides for an equal number of school board and teacher representatives on the Liaison Committees. Teacher representatives are appointed by the NLTA through the Membership and Benefits Services Committee and are selected from the branch presidents (or designates) of the branches operating within the boundaries of the school board.

The 2001-02 school year was a busy one for the Liaison Committees, especially in the midst of contract negotiations. Unless otherwise agreed by the committee members, meetings take place three times per year, normally after school hours. Some of the main topics and issues that were discussed and addressed during the past year include: Occupational Health and Safety requirements; school board policies on school closures for weather reasons; concerns regarding the cost of fuel and other amenities and the availability of housing for teachers in Labrador; air quality in schools; substitute teacher hiring practices, and the availability of substitutes and substitute days; professional development/in-service issues; school opening/closing and holiday schedules; concerns regarding the implementation of the Pathways program; protocol for dealing with parental complaints/concerns; school needs in the areas of technology, text books, resources, repairs, etc. The evaluation reports filed with the NLTA by the Liaison Committee teacher representatives at the end of the past school year indicate that solutions were reached for many of the issues raised at the meetings, while others were partially resolved or remain topics for ongoing discussion.

The most important aspect of School Board-Teacher Liaison Committees is the opportunity they allow for teachers to provide input to their school boards on issues that impact on their day to day work lives. However, in order for Liaison Committees to play a meaningful role, they must be kept informed of current issues and concerns that teachers have. Teachers who would like a certain topic to be raised at a Liaison Committee meeting should communicate this to their school representative. There is a form available for this purpose which can be obtained from your school representative or on the NLTA website under the heading of Publications (www.nlta.nf.ca). School representatives will then bring teachers' concerns to the attention of the branch president who, if he/she is not a member of the Liaison Committee for the current year, will ensure that the issue is forwarded to a member of the Committee for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting.

A listing of School Board-Teacher Liaison Committees will be published in a future edition of *The Bulletin*. If you require any specific information regarding School Board-Teacher Liaison Committees, please contact Geralyn Costello, Assistant to the President, by calling 726-3223 or toll free at 1-800-563-3599, ext. 222, or Stefanie Tuff, Administrative Officer, in the Benefits and Economic Services Division, ext. 232.

The Dilemma of Rising Health Insurance Premiums



by DON ASH

Workers and employers are becoming increasingly alarmed at the escalating cost of health insurance premiums. The NLTA Health Insurance Plan has experienced premium rate increases in each of the last four years, and annual premium increases in the range of 20% are expected for the foreseeable future if health insurance benefits are to be maintained. This article will discuss some of the reasons for these increases and the dilemma faced by Trustees in attempting to meet the conflicting interest of teachers in maintaining/increasing benefits and reducing/maintaining premium rates.

Phone calls to the NLTA Office indicate a general misunderstanding of the business of group insurance. NLTA owns the Health Insurance Plan. Government contributes 50% of the premium as per the Collective Agreement. The Health Plan is insured by Manulife Financial. Johnson Incorporated pays the claims, administers the plan, and provides consulting and brokerage service to the NLTA. Quite simply, the premiums paid by teachers must equal the claims paid out to teachers plus expenses. Over 93% of premiums go directly to paid claims while 4% of premiums are paid to Government in premium tax. Less than 3% of premiums go to expenses and commissions paid to the insurance underwriters.

Prescription drugs comprise almost 83% of the total claims under the NLTA Group Insurance Health Plan. Approximately $8M was paid to teachers for prescription drug claims in the 2001-02 school year. This figure is expected to increase significantly for the foreseeable future. Some of the reasons for the increases in health insurance claims are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Increased utilization of health insurance plan by NLTA members

Demographics of the NLTA Health Insurance Plan show an increasing age of insured members. As our members age, the use of prescription drugs increases. In 2001-02, teachers on pension received $1.27 in claims for every $1.00 paid in premium. Active members received .71¢ in claim for every dollar paid in premium. The following table of the top five NLTA drugs illustrates the pressure on premiums.

TOP 5 NLTA DRUGS		
Drug	Amount Claimed	Cost per Pill
Losec (delayed)	$366,070	$2.16
Lipitor	$203,480	$1.81
Paxil	$162,207	$1.66
Zocur	$155,976	$2.12
Celebrex	$147,811	$1.27

In 1996, drugs for cholesterol, antidepressants, ulcer, arthritis, and blood pressure accounted for 24.8% of drug costs in Canada.

In 2003, these drugs are predicted to account for 56.5% of drug costs in Canada.

The following illustrates the rapid growth of prescription drug costs in Canada.

YEARS	CANADA – ANNUAL DRUG COST
1950	$100M
1951-1960	$150M
1961-1970	$370M
1971-1980	$1.2B
1981-1990	$3.5B
1991-2000	$9.5B
2001-2010	$30B

New more expensive prescription drugs with no generic substitution and direct to consumer advertising are creating demand for these drugs. One only needs to turn on the television to witness the advertising of new and expensive drugs being developed by the Pharmaceutical companies. Patent protection prevents

the introduction and substitution of cheaper generic drugs. Celebrex is one such obvious drug recently introduced and already the fifth largest drug claim under the NLTA plan. The following table illustrates several of the expensive drugs covered by the NLTA plan recently.

New Drugs Covered		
Drug	Amount Claimed	Cost per Pill
Neupogen	$74,611	$187.93
Betaseron	$59,381	$119.96
Rebif	$40,388	$144.58
Avonex	$17,833	$371.53

Downloading from the Public Plan (MCP)
Shorter stays in hospital where drugs are provided through MCP are increasing costs for private insurance plans. Patients are now leaving the hospital to recover at home with prescriptions in hand. In some cases (Remicade for example) patients are being asked to bring their drugs to the hospital when they come for treatment.

Lack of understanding by members of the health insurance plan
Some members have suggested that one should only take out claims equal to what an individual pays in to the Health Insurance Plan. Complaints are received that "I haven't made any claims this year, so why should my premiums increase?" The philosophy of group insurance is that members in good health subsidize those in poor health providing catastrophic protection for all members. The following information regarding payouts last year to NLTA members in drug claims alone illustrate the importance of health insurance coverage. Some of our individual members who are already under the pressure of poor health would experience financial disaster.

Catastrophic Drug Usage
Annual Drug Payout:
• > $20,000 - 8 members
• Between $10,000 and $20,000 - 27 members

About 50% of the phone calls received at the NLTA regarding health insurance are requests for increased level of coverage – glasses, physiotherapy, over-the-counter medications, transportation, home care, etcetera. The other half of calls received are requests for lower premiums or complaints about rising premiums. The two types of requests are mutually exclusive. Trustees have made a decision to maintain current benefits (despite Government pressure to reduce benefits) and premium increases are necessary just to accomplish the status quo.

There is little comfort in the fact that all Group Insurance Plans in North America are experiencing similar pressure on premiums and benefits. The challenge for Group Insurance plans is to maintain a reasonable coverage for the membership at a reasonable cost. Pressure will mount for Group Insurance plans to change or reduce benefit coverage to encourage less use of drugs or to limit the type of drugs covered. The options available to NLTA Group Insurance Trustees are limited and include the following:

Options
• Continue plan design with 20% + annual premium increases for the foreseeable future.
• Attempt cost containment through membership education, wellness promotion.
• Attempt cost containment through plan design changes - managed formulary/special authorization.
• Reduce benfit co-insurance, eg. 70 to 30 percent.
• Strip benefits like vision care, transportation, and hospital care.
• Experience rate premiums of retirees separate from actives.

The dilemma for Group Insurance Trustees is to provide the coverage which teachers desire and at the same time maintain a reasonable premium, which Government will continue to agree to co-pay. NLTA Trustees will continue to address these challenges on behalf of teachers of Newfoundland and Labrador, both active and retired. In the meantime, premiums will continue to rise.

Don Ash is an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA.

NLTA Group Insurance Renewals

(Effective September Deductions)

by DON ASH

Every insured member of the NLTA Group Insurance Plan should have received a memorandum in August from the Group Insurance Trustees, all of whom are teachers (one retired teacher), detailing the renewal decisions for September.

The purpose of this article is to highlight these changes, and recent developments regarding our group insurance program.

- Effective the first payroll cheque in September, premiums were increased in Life Insurance (Basic Life, Dependent Life, and Retiree Life), Health Insurance, and Long-Term Disability Insurance.
- Effective the first payroll cheque in September, premiums were decreased in Voluntary Life Insurance and the Medical Out of Country Travel Insurance.
- Effective October 1, 2002, dental claims will be paid based on the 2000 Newfoundland Suggested Dental Fee Guide rather than the 1999 Fee Guide.
- The premium rates for the Basic and Voluntary Accidental Death and Dismemberment, and the Dental Insurance policies remain unchanged.
- Beginning in 2003, the renewal date for the NLTA Group Insurance plan will be changed from October 1 (September deduction month) to May 1 (effective April deduction month.) This means teachers can expect further premium changes in April of 2003. In the future, premium rate changes will occur each April, rather than September.
- Government and the NLTA have settled a dispute over premiums outstanding from September 2000. On September 5, 2002, government paid all outstanding premiums owed to the NLTA (as a result of an arbitration and court award) and agreed to the premium changes for September 2002.

Trustees continue to seek the best rates for our members. Unfortunately, claims paid out to teachers continue to rise, necessitating increases in Life, Health and Disability premiums.

Trustees will continue to keep members informed of developments and act in the best interest of teachers to maintain benefits, while keeping premiums as low as possible.

Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence

Prime Minister Honours Innovative Teachers

The 2001-02 recipients of the Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence were announced this past May at a gala event honouring national winners held on Parliament Hill. Teachers from Newfoundland and Labrador were honoured this year with seven awards – two were Certificates of Excellence, and five were Certificates of Achievement. "Every day, the teachers we honour today develop new and creative ways to help young people learn," said Prime Minister Chrétien. "They meet their students with energy, with creativity, and an unshakeable determination to see these kids succeed. We owe these teachers an incredible debt." The Certificate of Excellence recipients from Newfoundland and Labrador are:

Carl Goulding, Mount Pearl Senior High School and Mount Pearl Intermediate School. Mr. Goulding teaches music, social studies and religion, from Grades 7 to 12. His infamous Mount Pearl Show Choir features singers and dancers and is very involved in the musical heritage of Newfoundland and Labrador. He has increased choir participation from 11 students to more than 200 in one year. In a school with 951 students, 21 percent are in the choir. Mr. Goulding believes students must be more than taught effectively; they must take ownership of their learning and develop self-confidence and responsibility by planning, developing and staging performances together.

Prime Minister Chrétien presents Carl Goulding with his Certificate of Excellence award at the Prime Minister's Awards gala on Parliament Hill this past May.

Valerie Pike, Prince of Wales Collegiate, St. John's. Ms. Pike teaches French (core and immersion) and international studies from Grades 10 to 12. Ms. Pike has transformed the school's French department into a department of modern languages, offering popular classes in French, Spanish, Russian and international studies. Enrolment rose 25 percent in the first year alone. She has received numerous other honours including the 2000-01 Canadian Parents for French Award for French Immersion Teacher of the Year in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the 2000-01 Rotary Award for Teaching Excellence. Ms. Pike believes in enabling students to open doors to the rest of the world through language and cultural studies, and to view themselves as citizens of the world.

Valerie Pike accepts her Certificate of Excellence award from Prime Minister Jean Chrétien at the awards gala in Ottawa this past May.

The Certificate of Achievement recipients from Newfoundland and Labrador are:

Stella Greenslade, Mount Pearl Senior High School. Ms. Greenslade teaches enterprise, consumer studies, global issues, and Canadian geography in Grades 10 to 12. She has developed a successful and popular enterprise course which grew from 19 to 42 students in the first year, and her students achieved pass rates of greater than 92 percent, with a class average of 74 percent. Ms. Greenslade emphasizes transferable skills to empower learners to believe in themselves and nurture

their enterpreneurship skills. Her classroom activities encourage competition, creative thinking and problem solving and capture students' interest and attention.

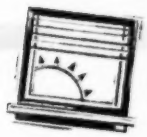
Paul Matthews, Booth Memorial High School, St. John's. Mr. Matthews teaches literature, reading, language, and advanced writing in Grades 10 to 12. He inspires his students with lively and stimulating learning experiences, drawing on a wide range of literary resources and adapting his teaching strategies for each class. In an inner city school with a wide variety of abilities and interest, Mr. Matthews' classes have very low absentee rates and a 97 percent pass rate. Several students have won provincial essay competitions and scored high on Advance Placement and college board examinations. He believes teaching involves two-way communications and that teachers need to remain open and receptive to their students' ideas.

Carolyn Morgan, Bishops College, St. John's. Ms. Morgan teaches English in Grades 10 to 12. She integrates cross-curricular learning situations and technology into the classroom through activities such as the Metamorphosis Project in which art students created paintings, drawings and sculptures based on fantasy descriptions written by her English students. Technology students then digitally photographed this artwork and created book covers to bind the stories. These books were displayed in the school art gallery. Ms. Morgan believes teachers, as role models for students, have a responsibility to influence students by example. She says teachers need to be flexible and open and use different teaching strategies to reach students' individual learning styles.

Gary Parsons, Herdman Collegiate, Corner Brook. Mr. Parsons teaches social studies (Canadian and world geography, Canadian issues, enterprise) in Grades 10 to 12. He empowers students academically to motivate them to be active citizens. The pass rate in Mr. Parsons' geography courses is 93 percent, with more than one third of students receiving a grade of greater than 85 percent. His students earn scholarships and are selected to attend conferences, trade missions, youth parliaments and ambassador programs. He created the Herdman Humanities Society to promote active citizenship and stewardship and give students a better understanding of local, national and global problems. Mr. Parsons believes teachers must be responsible, competent and caring advocates for students' success and provide meaningful, relevant learning experiences. He says teachers need to focus on academics but also provide opportunities to have students maximize their learning through participation in humanitarian activities.

Michelle Stead, Topsail Elementary, Topsail. Ms. Stead teaches all subjects and intensive French in Grade 6. She pioneered a new Grade 6 intensive French program at Topsail Elementary. Each year's first term features 80 percent French-language instruction, while the second term is compacted core curriculum. The program enables students to acquire second-language proficiency while meeting grade-level curriculum outcome goals by the end of the school year. Her students have developed second-language skills equivalent to those of senior high school students and most continued French immersion in later grades. Ms. Stead believes in creating a learning environment that is both stimulating and supportive of students.

A total of 72 teachers received the 2001-02 Prime Minister's Award, 19 at the national (Certificate of Excellence) level. Awards are worth $5,000 at the national level and $1,000 at the local level. Funds are given to winning teachers' schools to be spent under the recipients' direction. For more information on the Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence, contact the PMA Program office at 1-800-575-9200 or visit the PMA website at www.schoolnet.ca/pma.



Facing the Classroom… Head On!

by CLAUDETTE E S COOMBS

If you are a new teacher just starting out, a seasoned master returning for year 30 or, are anywhere in between, facing the classroom in September brings a mix of emotions. The anticipatory highs and the apprehension of uncertainty combine to create an adrenaline flow to match the energy of opening day.

For any teacher, the beginning of the school year is the ideal time to set personal guidelines and boundaries for self care and survival. We tend to automatically focus on work goals and priorities. However, given the stressors of the teaching environment, it is imperative that we consider the impact that our chosen career has on our lives and relationships and to establish our personal goals and priorities. Think of these goals as your "new year's resolutions". The first step to achieving goals is to clarify them. *Define your personal priorities for the year.* These may be to monitor and enhance personal health; keep family in the forefront; or plan for an exciting future. Now that you have direction, *make choices that create an environment conducive to achieving goals.* That means choosing healthy and constructive options for self care, relationship building or future management… whatever your goals require. The final step to ensure success is to *take action which supports your choices.* This may include formalizing your choices by actually paying the membership fees at a selected class; engaging a friend or partner as coach to keep you on task; or committing to fit personal things in your schedule as firmly as work.

Self care requires consideration of all aspects of personal well-being. We usually know what we need but rarely make the determined effort to ensure that our needs are given due time, energy and commitment. Reflect on the things you need to feel healthy, happy and in control of your life. If you don't have these resources, develop a strategy to put them in place. Protecting our physical and emotional health isn't a luxury. It is a necessity. If we feel that we can't afford to concentrate our time or other resources on ourselves then we're wrong. We can't afford not to. The airline has good reason for instructing you, in an emergency situation, to put on your own oxygen mask before helping someone else. Think about that. Of course you want to help your child, parent or the less able person sitting next to you. However, if you pass out due to lack of oxygen, your child may never get his mask on and both of you suffer.

We sometimes reject the emphasis on self care because we think it means "either" – "or". *Either* I spend time on you *or* I spend time on me, not both. Instead, it actually means *"first"* – *"then"*. First I prepare myself for my role, then I am able to help meet the needs of others. This is true in our professional and personal lives. We wouldn't consider trying to teach a course without reviewing the curriculum, noting the objectives and developing lesson plans. Why do we believe that we can, or must, endure the physical and emotional demands of doing a job, making a relationship work or achieving the top of Maslow's pyramid, without first giving our bodies and minds what is needed to succeed in meeting those challenges? As a review, here's what we need: a body as physically healthy as it can be; an attitude which can support us through the difficulties which surely lie in wait; knowledge which allows healthy choices; and skills which promote growth and achievement. If you want, go back to the Primary school health curriculum to be reminded of the basic components of health – sleep, rest, nutrition, exercise and recreation. If we get those in the right balance, we're well ahead of the majority.

New Teachers

Being a student doesn't totally prepare you for the new experiences as a teacher in the school environment. You may feel overwhelmed by the sense of responsibility and the need to understand and meet the expectations within the school climate. Policies and general practices, workload, extra-curricular involvement, student behaviour, classroom norms, and academic standards will each present issues to be handled and accommodated. In adjusting to these new demands, be sure to take advantage of the resources at your disposal. Senior teachers have "been there". Talk to them and seek their professional assistance and moral support. The NLTA,

including the Professional Development Division and the Virtual Teacher Centre, offers a variety of resources to equip you for the classroom. Teaching strategies, classroom management techniques, lesson plans and links to other supports are among the things they offer. The Employee Assistance Program is available for personal support and skills development in helping you secure and maintain personal balance between your job and the rest of your life. Get to know the staff and services of the NLTA and make use of them.

A word of caution: your days of functioning solely as a student are part of the past! Now you need to put in place your long-term strategies for personal growth and satisfaction. Your younger body may have recovered from the week-long, all-night study binges before finals or the exhaustion as you pushed to get those last assignments completed. Back then you worked on a semester basis where the pressure lifted at the end of exams. Now, it's important to establish routines and schedules that meet your new demands and leave no room for procrastination. The block of work time has become ten months instead of four and there are a lot more people depending on your attitude, energy and organization. Be careful to set up work and personal habits which promote good health.

Returning Teachers

Returning to familiar ground has some advantages. As a returning teacher, with a few exceptions, you already know the material, staff, students, school atmosphere, behaviour and work level. In contrast, introducing any change presents new opportunities, challenges, variety and a chance to learn from interactions with another group of professionals and students. If you are experiencing a sense of repetition at returning to the same setting, seeking change can enhance the appeal of another year. A different setting, new position or responsibilities, different courses or even volunteering for new extra-curricular activities or school committees will give the opportunity for new experiences and can bring excitement to a familiar setting.

For returning teachers, change in role may have been requested or involuntary. Either way, there are necessary adjustments to ensure a relatively smooth transition to accomplishing new duties and expectations.

When change is involuntary there is often a sense of a loss of control or a feeling of being manipulated. This happens when we believe that someone else determines our fate and is especially problematic when the change is undesirable. The pains of unwanted change can be eased when there is a spirit of cooperation and accommodation expressed by those implementing the change. If this doesn't seem apparent, talk to those in charge to express your concerns and seek improvement. This may create a better atmosphere, if not, it is up to you to seek additional intervention or to adjust your personal expectations and goals for that setting.

A Message to Administrators

As the leader in your school community you also take responsibility for your staff. You are a significant source of guidance and support in your actions to assist in setting appropriate limits and priorities and in promoting early intervention when you recognize signs of difficulty or overload. However, you may need a reminder to be careful of your own needs. Know when you are reaching your limits and take action to acquire the support and direction which could benefit you.

Planning for Success

Whether you are a new or returning teacher, you will be exposed to issues which require your planning. The better prepared you are, the more likely it is that you will successfully conquer the obstacles to achieving peak performance. *Conflict* is a common concern. It can be interpersonal conflict with staff, parents or students or intra-personal conflict as you adjust to a new system of operating in an environment where someone else has determined the rules. Establishing personal boundaries and learning appropriate means of conflict resolution can do a great deal to minimize our distress. *Expectations*, especially the unrealistic ones, of family, school, community or even self tend to pose the most significant sources of stress. Learning to understand and adjust expectations is the best way to prevent them from overtaking our peace of mind. *Workload* is a constant cause of mental and physical fatigue. This reflects considerably on our sense of duty. We want to do the best job with the most preparation in every situation. We need to keep the simple rule of economics in mind, our resources are limited and when we use time or energy on one thing, it isn't available for something else. At times we must select where our resources are to be spent, even to the exclusion of other important needs. Setting priorities and confirming expectations will make these decisions a little easier.

"The beginning of the school year is the ideal time to set personal guidelines and boundaries for self care and survival."

Best wishes as you start your year, and always be reminded of your reasons for choosing teaching as a career. Experiencing the reality of those reasons is integral to maintaining a sense of satisfaction and peace in our lives.

Claudette Coombs is an EAP Coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for teachers. For confidential assistance contact Claudette Coombs (ext. 242) or Marie Wall (ext. 265).

Grief in the Classroom

The Child As Teacher

by PENNY PINSENT

Have you ever watched the snow gently falling on a pastoral winter scene inside a plastic water-ball? Have you laughed as a little child picked it up, shook it rapidly and then watched the storm blow with all its might? Have you thought about how the people inside the ball (if they were real) would feel?Their once predictable, quiet little world now reveals itself to be rather ominous at will. By one snow-storm their view of the world and their place within it has totally changed.

Compare this to the experience of the bereaved child. Once content and secure in the love of family and friends, she now faces the myriad of emotions defined as grief. She is forever altered, and grief accompanies her through each day until she has fully dealt with her loss.

"As educators, the most important thing we can do is listen. Ultimately, the child knows the way through her grief; she just needs our hand to support her on the journey."

Since a significant part of the bereaved child's day is spent in school, it is very important that the support she needs to work through her grief be available when she returns to class. School, in fact, becomes quite important for children who are grieving. Their families may be so preoccupied with their own grief that they are unavailable to assist the child through the grief journey.

While dealing with a child's grief seems an impossible task, teachers need to realize that it is not their responsibility to "fix it". During the grief process what the child needs most is the opportunity to share feelings, beliefs and questions. In speaking with the bereaved child, we can inadvertently break down the bridges we are trying to build. The simple statement, "Don't cry." may communicate the message that it is wrong to show emotion when a person is hurting.

How then do we support the bereaved student? Unfortunately, society traditionally responds to grief with words recommending a quick fix such as: "I'm sure you will get another dog."; "She is in a better place."; "You need to let go and move on." Words which do not acknowledge the child's emotion. Sit those words down, they should not be given an audience. Instead, use the letters in the SEAATM acronym to remember the basic principles involved in supporting a grieving student: Safe Environment, Awareness, Adaptation, and Teachable Moment.

Safe Environment: At the beginning of the year, teachers seek to establish classrooms where students take responsibility for their learning, respect each other, resolve conflicts, and work collaboratively. Such classrooms are "safe environments" where children feel comfortable talking about their feelings.

To ensure a safe classroom environment for the grieving student, prepare her classmates. To determine what to tell them, ask the child. During class discussions, allow children to ask questions. In answering, keep in mind their developmental level and avoid clichés. For example, telling children that someone "went to sleep" may make them afraid to sleep. Instead, explain that death is when the "body stops working." Teach children that death usually occurs when someone is very old, but sometimes young people become so sick that doctors cannot fix their bodies. Address misconceptions the students have about death which can create barriers in processing grief.

In addition to knowing about their friend's loss, classmates also need to know what to expect from her. Use the water ball analogy. Discuss the before and after of the imaginary people there to assist students in understanding the changes. Their classmate may cry, become angry or want to be alone. At other times she will play like she always did. Next, give them time to create something to show the friend that they are thinking of her.

Awareness: Teachers need to be aware of the common signs of grief in children. These include: often talking about the death, or speaking about the person

who died in the present tense; over or underachieving; becoming the class clown; having difficulty focusing; or acting as if nothing happened.

Counselling referrals should be considered if the child displays dramatic changes in schoolwork, or behaviour, or if the child had a difficult relationship with the deceased.

Adaptation: Teachers need to be flexible when working with bereaved students. Common adaptations which support the bereaved child include: altering the workload or working conditions; working with a buddy; allowing frequent calls home or visits to the guidance counsellor for reassurance; providing private time or a place to be alone; and, using artistic media and journals to work out feelings. Be consistent with behavioural limits. It gives a sense of security. When misbehaviour occurs the child should know that her teacher is there if she needs to talk.

Teachable Moment: Children need to be repeatedly taught about the natural cycle of life and death so they understand death as a permanent but normal part of living. To do this teachers can take advantage of "teachable moments" by studying nature's life cycles, discussing local news headlines and reading quality children's literature. Also, when any loss touches the lives of children, encourage them to express their feelings and plan a ceremony to celebrate that life. Remember, developmentally appropriate exposure to this topic serves the same purpose as inoculation against disease. Prior exposure will help promote the necessary understanding for grief recovery when loss occurs.

Dealing with a child's grief is quite difficult as it makes us feel vulnerable. Brushing it aside however, may result in the child being unable to process feelings and which can cause difficulties into adulthood. As educators, the most important thing we can do is listen. Ultimately, the child knows the way through her grief, she just needs our hand to support her on the journey.

Penny Pinsent is a Kindergarten and Special Education teacher at St. Matthews Elementary School in St. John's.

Professional Development Delivered Right to Your Screen – No Software Required

by AIDA FAHOUM

"The Virtual Teacher Centre provides teachers with an opportunity to connect with one another and to learn collaboratively."

Welcome to the Virtual Teacher Centre (VTC) – a Web site that offers access to a wealth of information directly related to, influenced by, and built for the professional needs of educators. The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association (NLTA) launched the VTC in November of last year to serve the needs of educators in the province. Since its launch, the site has received significant praise. As it builds, assists, and delivers both Web-based professional development and curriculum support in a variety of formats that are accessible and user friendly, the VTC has become Canada's first epicenter of educator professional development.

The VTC intends to make PD accessible virtually anywhere. Professional development for teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador has faced challenges for a number of years largely due to the province's vast geographical area. Many schools are located in rural or remote areas, making it difficult for educators to regularly travel to main locations and complete professional development courses and programs. The lack of substitute teachers has also complicated this process.

Although the Association's initiative was built on the delivery of education-related information via the Internet, the intention has never been, and will never be, to replace the personal delivery of PD. Alex Hickey, coordinator of the VTC, says, "We saw this as an opportunity, not to displace face-to-face PD, but to enhance and to provide some enrichment to the face-to-face experiences teachers are getting."

The site offers educators the opportunity to earn PD points for completed activities. "This province does not have a mechanism that recognizes teacher learning outside of the formalized institutions for accreditation. Rather than wait until there was some resolution to that dialogue, we decided to go ahead and award PD points," says Hickey. One PD point is based on one hour of study. PD points are tracked using the site's digital portfolio. At present, the activities available for PD credit include *Quick Reads* and *Investigations*.

Quick Reads give users an opportunity to engage in online learning activities on a particular topic of interest. Here, users simply browse through the provided reading, or may choose to write a 100-word summary for credit. *Quick Reads* cover topics ranging from Attention Deficit Disorder to Commercialism in Schools to Instructional Rubrics. Also connected to this feature are Web links that directly relate to the topic at hand. If a user wishes to engage in further study, the resources are available at the click of a button.

Investigations are considered "introductions," or "refreshers." Again, the range of topics available for study are vast, and include readings on such topics as Block Scheduling, Looping, and Current Issues in Education (such as Standardized Testing, Relevance of Research, and Mixed-Age Grouping). When taken for PD credit, *Investigations* presents users with readings on chosen topics and gives them the opportunity to further pursue topics, apply, and reflect on newly acquired knowledge. Registered users submit completed activities and PD points are automatically sent to the portfolio of that user.

Membership is free, and available to virtually anyone in the education community. The site features Tutorials, Mediated Study Groups, Web casts, Subject Centres, PD Web quests, and Electronic Seminars. Resources are endless and include links to Canadian resources, curriculum resources, newspapers, Canadian information resources, and government information services. Educators may also submit material, which is reviewed and posted for public viewing.

The VTC not only provides professional development activities, but also allows educators to interact with other educators, content, and technology, as well as allow bodies of knowledge to interact with other bodies of knowledge. Throughout its planning, the NLTA was concerned about how adults learn online. "We went looking for instructional learning models, and we were not really able to nail down anything substantially different from the classroom model. A lot of people were bringing content over to the Web in text format and basically replicating the old university environment. We served to think differently about it, and to look at how the Web allows us to interact," says Hickey.

For both new teachers and pre-service teachers, the VTC offers a plethora of education-related information,

classroom, and curriculum support, and access to a variety of invaluable resources that are not always readily available or easily accessible.

"The need to be able to support new teachers in dynamic ways is growing, and the VTC offers us a way to do that," says Wayne Hallett, president of the Program Specialists Special Interest Council of the NLTA. Referring to the diversity the VTC offers teachers, Hallett says, "The VTC provides teachers with an opportunity to connect with one another and to learn collaboratively."

The VTC also offers teachers the opportunity to interact with each other to discuss issues such as exceptionalities within the classroom. "The VTC offers teachers ways to connect and actually share with other teachers their practices, or to gather from other teachers the practices that will be beneficial in meeting the needs of exceptional children. It provides those teaching in a situation that they might consider to be unique the opportunity to connect easily with another teacher in a similar situation, share practices, and benefit from one another's knowledge," comments Hallett.

"It is timely, it is overdue, and it is very available," says Gerald Buffett, principal at Newfoundland's Fitzgerald Academy. "Both province-wide and internationally, the potential certainly is there."

The Fitzgerald Academy is presently conducting a pilot project with the K-6 program that looks specifically at skills and outcomes in the classroom with the use of technology. "When we obtain the results of that pilot, we will pass that information over to Alex so that it can be part of the VTC. Within the province, other teachers can look and see what we as one school are doing to address the outcomes of using technology with the children in those grade levels. If other individuals come out and share similar initiatives – to look at, use, or constructively criticize – the VTC will be quite the knowledge bank to be used as a resource by teachers anywhere in the province or anywhere in the country," says Buffett.

Joe Lafitte teaches senior high level technological studies at Newfoundland's Crescent College. He states, "The VTC will be a catalyst for great things in PD in the province and as well will be a model that will be borrowed or exported over the world. It goes to show that even though a place may not be big, it can do big things. I believe that when the VTC gets fully up-and-running and as more teachers get online, it will be the catalyst for many undertakings in education."

The VTC works in partnership with Memorial University and the Department of Education for the development of online material. The VTC also frequently collaborates with 20 teacher-based special interest councils, including The Newfoundland and Labrador Educators of the Deaf, Educational Partnerships, and READ (Reading, English and Drama). The Association regularly runs plans by these councils and receives direction from them. In addition to the collaboration with the special interest councils, the NLTA works closely with the administrative program staff at school districts, as well as educators at schools across the province. "We want to discover what their mandates in PD are and see how we can blend and support each other – in essence, to uncover what their agenda is and to allow that to drive our content. We could quite easily develop a lot of content, but we are reluctant to do that because it is much more effective if it comes from the grassroots," says Hickey.

Although the site is predominantly in English, two special interest councils – the Modern Languages Council and the Consiel de Enseignant(e)s Francophones – address matters for French teachers. When completed, these components of the site will have significant French content. In addition, the VTC plans to meet with the Francophone school board next month to discuss how the VTC can address some of the PD needs of Francophone teachers. At present, the VTC lesson plan database will accommodate lesson plans from French teachers, and French teachers will have the same opportunity as English teachers to contribute content to the site.

Although the NLTA's initiative is still in its infancy, with continued interest and support, the site is well on its way to being a cornerstone in PD delivery and will soon establish itself as a one-stop-shop for educators of all levels. The potential of a site such as this is infinite. As the teaching profession is inherently rooted in the spirit of sharing, it is imperative that the whole education community gathers to ensure a gradual and successful development of the NLTA online community.

So, what can educators do to help foster this site and ensure that it is built strongly from the ground up? Hickey responds, "The Web is probably the most democratic institution we have ever had. Because it is not governed by anyone, it really takes its direction from the people who use it, despite what the advertisers might want to think. Teachers have an opportunity to be the architects of their own professional growth. We believe that teachers in this province will come to that. I believe that eventually, most of the content on here will be either developed or directed by teachers – that is its strength, and that will be its power."

This article was featured in the May/June 2002 issue of "Teach" magazine and has been reprinted with permission.
Aida Fahoum is a freelance writer and a graduate teacher who will begin teaching this fall. She can be reached at aidfah@hotmail.com.

CIDA's Global Classroom Initiative

Educating Students to Become Responsible Global Citizens

by KEITH SAMUELSON

This post-September 11th academic year presents a unique challenge for teachers. Never before have we been forced to contemplate such disturbing questions: Is suicide bombing a legitimate form of political protest? Should law-abiding citizens be held accountable for their government's policies? What is the proper ethical response to an atrocity? Is every human life sacred? To ignore these questions is to render our teaching irrelevant. Responding to them will generate considerable debate, but one fact is irrefutable: we are all connected. Responsible global citizenship is essential to our personal security and collective survival.

Keith Samuelson with students from the primary wing of a school in New Delhi, India as part of his Project Overseas assignment sponsored by CTF and CIDA.

Collaborative projects related to international issues have never been more relevant. The Global Classroom Initiative, sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) provides an extraordinary opportunity for us to meet the unique challenges resulting from our enhanced global awareness. This initiative encourages young Canadians to become informed and involved global citizens by providing financial support – up to $150,000 – for projects which engage students in active exploration of international development and cooperation issues.

CIDA has recently approved 14 Global Classroom Initiatives designed by various educational institutions across Canada. Two of these were granted to Prince of Wales Collegiate in St. John's (www.pwc.k12.nf.ca). One focuses on what we have already done, the other on what we would like to do.

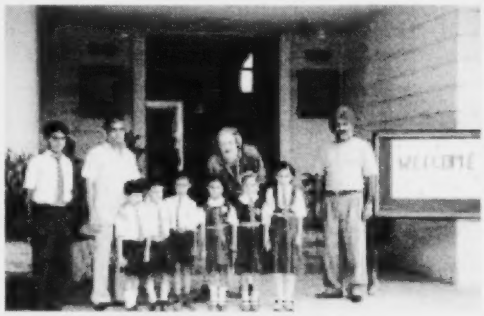
Our staff has developed extensive programming in International Studies. It is a vital element of school culture and includes cross-curricular projects, independent study, immersion in a foreign culture, travel to Cuba and Russia and a professional development component with all teachers to provide total curriculum integration and long- term sustainability. The "International Studies Program" is a project to develop an online database of personnel, resources, learning outcomes and technical support to enable other schools to develop and implement their own International Studies program.

"The World Youth Manifesto Project" is an attempt to communicate the dreams and aspirations of this generation to a global audience. Young people from 175 countries expressed their expectations for the future at a World Parliament of Children in Paris during October of 1999. On April 10, 2000 the Canadian Parliament became the first government in the world to officially receive this Manifesto. Teachers and students from 11 countries, every province in Canada and every Canadian political party applauded their efforts during an emotionally-charged ceremony in the Senate Chamber. This year teachers at Prince of Wales Collegiate would like to educate students to become responsible global citizens by creating an innovative learning resource: a cross-curricular, multi-media website based on UNESCO's World Youth Manifesto for the Twenty-first Century.

The World Youth Manifesto has six themes:

- Peace and Nonviolence – This century should be one of peace among nations;
- Education – Affordable education is a necessity for every person regardless of race, gender, economic status or cultural background;
- Environment – We must respect the environment in order to ensure the survival of our planet;

• Economic Development, Human Development – The basic needs of all human beings should be better satisfied, including health, education, adequate food, a good standard of living and an end to discrimination;
• Solidarity – We must care for others and respect them without expecting anything in return;
• Culture, Communication and Intercultural Dialogue – It is important to maintain our culture, learn from others, promote intercultural dialogue and facilitate communication for peace and prosperity worldwide.



Students in New Delhi welcoming Keith Samuelson to their school.

Our staff will assist students in producing a website exhibiting their performances of understanding under each of these themes. The subject matter will include such topics as international conflicts, peace initiatives, globalization, student activism, the survival of our planet, genetic engineering, world hunger, human rights, discrimination, third world debt, poverty, multiculturalism and immigration. Performances of understanding will include commentaries, essays, research papers, poetry, short stories, paintings, photographs, sculptures, graphs, charts, musical compositions, animations and public displays. Students will be encouraged to respond in either official language.

Related learning activities, based on Dr. Howard Gardner's "Multiple Intelligence" theories, correlate exceptionally well with mandated curriculum. Our project meets all of the general curriculum outcomes for the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation. These general outcomes are supported by specific outcomes throughout the curriculum.

Our project will focus classroom instruction on the six themes of the manifesto across subject areas. Students will be given a list of topics pertaining to each theme and, individually or in groups, produce performances of understanding using media of their own choice, whether it be essay format, poetry, art or sculpture, animation or graph, letter to the editor, public exhibition, theatrical or musical performance. They will be encouraged to share their contributions locally and globally using the mass media and technology. Teachers will assess their work for credit towards their final grades in particular courses and recommend those to be included on the website.

This process addresses the individual needs of students by providing an opportunity to pursue personal interests, respond utilizing their strengths and develop multiple intelligences while connecting their education to the real world. We hope the target audience will grow from classmates to schoolmates and eventually to the global community as young people from other countries send us their contributions and an international dialogue is nurtured among responsible global citizens. Contributions from other schools in Newfoundland and Labrador are most welcome. We will be pleased to assist wherever there are teachers who want to learn from our experiences as we encourage young people to become informed about and engaged in global issues.

Keith Samuelson is the Global Education Coordinator at Prince of Wales Collegiate in St. John's. Teachers who are interested may contact Allister Dyke, Principal, Prince of Wales Collegiate, or Keith Samuelson.

History Made Interesting, Inspiring, and Integrative

by DOUGLAS GOSSE

Historica's Summer Institute for Teachers of Canadian History was held in St. John's at Memorial University, July 7-14, 2002. This year, Newfoundland also hosted Historica's Canadian National Heritage Fair at the same time, an occasion for 165 students, Grades 4-9, from all provinces and territories to come together and celebrate Canadian history and culture. Both of these events are the brainchild of the Historica Foundation of Canada, an organisation whose main goal is: *...to make learning about Canadian history more accessible, more enjoyable and more exciting for Canadians of all ages – to provide more and better opportunities to learn about Canadian history. And this to enhance the understanding and appreciation of Canadians from coast-to-coast-to-coast, of how great this country is – how it came to be great – and why, therefore, our continuing challenge as Canadians is to prove that we are worthy of our limitless opportunities.* (Red Wilson, Founding Co-Chairman, Historica)

The local Newfoundland organisers of both events showed superb team effort and planning that left participants from across Canada duly impressed with their pedagogical prowess, attention to detail, dedication, and sheer friendliness and approachability. The Summer Institute 2002 had several highlights, leading to wonderful opportunities for professional growth.

(l-r): Nath Sheppard, volunteer; Wally Penney, local chairperson of organising committee; Dr. Dave Dibbon, Memorial University Liaison, Faculty of Education; Roxanne Rideout, committee member; Douglas Gosse, bilingual facilitator; Mary van Thiel, committee member; Rosemary Webb, committee member; Dr. David Facey-Crowther, volunteer; (missing from photo: Ged Butt, volunteer)

A primary objective of the 2002 Summer Institute was learning and working with leading Canadian educators and historians. Prominent educator Tom Morton gave an insightful presentation on "Teaching for Understanding", in which the importance of empathy and social position were brought into light regarding so-called "facts" and historical interpretation. Québec historian Jacques Lacoursière, co-author of *Canada-Québec, synthèse historique* (2000), renowned for his many television and radio appearances, gave a moving talk on "Francophone Stories", highlighting both the richness of Canadian storytelling and bilingualism. Many teachers left his presentation with an increased appreciation for our cultural mosaic. Senator Laurier Lapierre gave a moving speech the final evening at a banquet held at the Fairmont Newfoundland. Addressing issues of terrorism, violence in society, and Canadian ideals of peace and diversity, it was impossible to not be affected by his zeal for Canadian history, and inspired by his message of tolerance and acceptance.

Another mandate of this year's Summer Institute was acquiring teaching strategies, such as "storytelling" and "stepping into the picture," to create greater interest for students in learning about Canada and Canadians. Dr. Sharon Cook, professor of the University of Ottawa, enlightened teachers about using personal histories and family artifacts as stepping stones for historical inquiry within a co-operative learning framework. Dr. Cook spoke with passion of issues pertaining to privilege and historical perspective, leaving teachers to ponder their choice and presentation of curriculum materials in a more analytical way. The Newfoundland and Labrador penchant for storytelling rang loud and clear with three teachers, all former participants in Summer Institutes. Dana Burridge, a master teacher from Deer Lake, has participated in provincial and national history initiatives for many years. Dana led a storytelling session with a stirring poem written by his grandfather. Dan O'Brian, a teacher in Bonavista, gave a moving rendition of *The Smokeroom on the Kyle*, the poetic tall tale by Ted Russell. Peter Laracy, a

teacher from Avalon West, had us in tears with a poignant tale of *Rose*, a tragic yet hopeful narrative of the union between a young Protestant man and Catholic woman. Our Canadian colleagues were inspired and, indeed, in awe. History is contingent on telling stories, and these educators demonstrated with talent and enthusiasm that history need not be boring, but may incorporate elements of drama, literature, personal investment, community involvement, and oral tradition that will provoke and enliven any class.

Included in the vigorous agenda of this Institute were local excursions to Commissariat House, Cape Spear, and Signal Hill, where laudable efforts were made to incorporate bilingual interpretation. Of special note are the contributions of Don Parsons from Parks Canada, and Dr. David Facey-Crowther, Head of the History Department at Memorial University, both of whom shared their expertise and contagious enthusiasm for local military history with the group. The trip to Ferryland, Colony of Avalon, one of the first permanent settlements in all of North America, was memorable for all. The tour was educational, entertaining, and fully bilingual.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage more history teachers to check out the website and get involved in Historica events, to share your expertise and personal stories with other educators from across Canada. The July 2003 Summer Institute for Teachers of Canadian History will be held in Sudbury, Ontario. Teachers may gain additional information through the Historica website at www.histori.ca. Canada and Canadians have so much to offer culturally, historically, and educationally. Not only will you become more invigorated in your teaching, your own life will be enriched, as Evelyn Maendal, a participant from Western Canada so clearly articulated to me in a recent e-mail: *In Newfoundland, everyone smiled, said hello and wanted to know about my culture. To me that meant a lot. It meant that they cared enough to ask and that makes a difference. I felt the way I feel around other Hutterites. Newfoundlanders would have done anything for me. Nothing was too much to ask. I really appreciated that. I honestly hope that sometime in my life I can return to this place and once more have "my faith in people restored".*

The July 2003 Summer Institute in Sudbury, Ontario promises to be an event of equal calibre, so get involved today!

Douglas Gosse is a former teacher at Macdonald Drive Junior High School in St. John's. He is a current Ph.D. candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Project Overseas 2003/2004

sponsored jointly by the Canadian Teachers' Federation and its Member Organizations

Each year about 50 Canadian teachers are chosen to work, **without salary**, on CTF's Project Overseas. Their assistance is given, upon invitation, to teachers in Africa, the Caribbean and Asia to improve teaching skills and strengthen professional teacher organizations.

Administrative, travel and living expenses are borne by the Canadian Teachers' Federation, the provincial and territorial teacher organizations which are Members of CTF, the Canadian International Development Agency, and the Wild Rose Foundation (an Alberta Agency for International Development).

It should be noted that the sponsors of Project Overseas do not pay any salaries or honoraria to teachers who apply to Project Overseas. Furthermore, the sponsors do not pay any costs associated with substitute teachers or release time.

REQUIREMENTS:

- membership in a provincial/territorial organization which is a CTF Member
- an appropriate teachers' certificate
- a minimum of five years teaching experience in Canada
- Canadian citizenship
- excellent health
- evidence of flexibility and mature judgement

In 2003/04 CTF will require teachers for:

Project Overseas I (the Summer Project) will operate during the months of July and August 2003 in English- and French-speaking countries. In 2002, teachers at the primary, elementary, and secondary levels were requested to teach the following: Biology, Classroom Management, Communication, Computer Studies, Course Design, Curriculum Development, Decision-Making, Educational Administration, English, ESL, Geography, Guidance & Counselling, History, Home Economics, Information Management, Instructional Technology in the Classroom, Language Arts, Leadership, Legal Aspect of Education (School Law), Mathematics, Multi-Level Teaching of Disabilities, Physical Education, Reading Recovery, School Administration, School Development Planning, Science, Special Education, Strategic Planning, Supervision of Quality Education, Teaching Techniques.

APPLICATIONS:

Deadline date for applications: **November 15, 2002**

Further information and application forms are available from:
Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association
3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, NF A1B 1W1
Tel: 726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599 (toll free in province)
Fax: 726-4302 or 1-877-711-6582 (toll free in province)

Sharpening the Saw

by HECTOR M. EARLE

It's a warm night in late August and I'm looking out my patio door feeling a little melancholy. It's the end of summer and my holidays are almost over. Don't get me wrong, I love teaching and all the joys and challenges that come with it (well, most of the time). But summers are my time to recharge. It's an opportunity to renew my mind, body and spirit. In Stephen Covey's words, "a time to sharpen the saw." Those perfect summer days of blissful sunshine and barbeques. When you can wake up early (or sleep late if you like) with sunlight flooding your room and the sweet melody of songbirds. Those times when the only major decision I have to make is whether to go salmon fishing or mow the lawn. Days of spending time with family, going places, seeing things and visiting people. Long warm evenings of blessed laughter with friends and acquaintances. And yes, finally an opportunity to read a couple of good books in that quiet spot when the only background noise is the gentle rustling of maple leaves in the soft wind. These are the days you think will never end, at least you hope not.

"I think of this slow-down period as a health investment for our whole being that enables us to recharge in order to take care of the most important business in our province – the educating and nurturing of the minds of our precious youth and tomorrow's leaders."

But the inevitable comes when the evenings shorten and you feel that little tint of Fall in the air. The time when the "Back to School" signs at Wal-Mart tell you that another school year is approaching. It won't be long now before the routine sets in. For new teachers it is a time for new beginnings. A time to embark upon a most rewarding and noble career. For those of us who are seasoned veterans, it's time to get our house in order and our classrooms ready. In the coming days I will go on shopping excursions with my wife for clothes and supplies for my daughter and perhaps a garment or two for myself. I will spend a day or two at the school getting out old materials and unpacking new stuff, decorating the walls and making seating plans. I will get used to it, perhaps even look forward to the routines of the upcoming year and my lethargic mind will once again be as sharp as the autumn wind. I will anticipate those eager faces of the first day and the promise and anticipation of a great year with the barrage of the never-ending activities and meetings of every description. In between the intensive classroom instructions there will be staff meetings, assemblies, Halloween parties, reports cards, PT conferences and Christmas concerts. The winter will bring the dreaded days of rushing to work through ice and snow, Valentine parties and Education Week. The spring will give way to another progress report, PT conferences and more staff meetings. Then the wind down will come when the weight of the school year plays heavy on your mind and once again we yearn for the long break.

I take another sip of my coffee and look across the beautiful still waters of the Dog Bay and suddenly realize how much teachers need their summers. Someone once said that the long break of summer isn't necessary and a lot more could be accomplished with a longer school year. I beg to differ. July and August allow us to replenish our empty mental tanks from the waves of activity from the other ten months of the year. I think of this slow-down period as a health investment for our whole being that enables us to recharge in order to take care of the most important business in our province – the educating and nurturing of the minds of our precious youth and tomorrow's leaders.

It's getting dark now and my arms are itchy from mosquito bites. I try to prepare myself for what lies ahead and still, after 27 years, I feel a little overwhelmed of the awesome responsibilities of teachers. I come inside and glance at the calendar. A few precious days left. I'll get ready for school next week. Tomorrow I think I'll go fishing and really sharpen the saw.

Hector M. Earle teaches at Newville Elementary, Newville.

RESOURCES

Editor's Choice for Resources on The Web

www.cowac.org
This website contains information about the Council on World Affairs of Canada and will be of interest to students and others who are interested in world affairs. The section "For Teachers" gives information on a cross-curricular handbook for Grades 7-9. The handbook can be purchased from cowac and exercises in the handbook are supplemented with material on the website. Other links to study guides, publications, poetry, Model United Nations (MUN) programs, and events/contacts will be of interest.

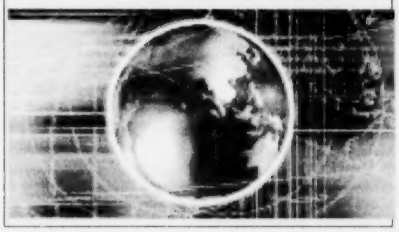
PARKS CANADA SPECIAL PLACES ECO-LESSONS

This environmentally focused curriculum supplement is an exciting interdisciplinary teaching tool, designed to complement the Atlantic Canada Science Curriculum. All lessons are classroom-based, do not require a visit to the national parks, and are based on learning outcomes in the following strands: Habitats (Gr. 4), Diversity of Life (Gr. 6), Interactions within Ecosystems (Gr. 7), Sustainability of Ecosystems (Gr. 10) and Biology – Life Sciences: Interactions among living things (Gr. 11). *Special Places* is free to teachers in Atlantic Canada, while supplies last. Please indicate whether you would like English or French and specify the intended grade level. Parks Canada will begin mailing packages September 3. For further information contact Denise Hansen (denise_hansen@pch.gc.ca); Tel: 902-426-4591 or fax: 902-426-7012.

TEACH IN AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL!

Attend our free information meeting in Toronto in October and/or register for our annual Teacher Recruitment Fair in February.

Further details at
www.searchassociates.com



There is a Power Among Us...

a power that instills a sense of well-being and purpose

that empowers people to break the cycle of poverty

that generates social development and decent earnings.

That's...

The Power of Learning

A Message from the Teachers of Atlantic Canada